



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Southeast Region Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Related Requirements

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW,

Washington, DC 20230, or via email at docpra@doc.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Adam Bailey, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, (727) 824-5305, *adam.bailey@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This request is for an extension of a currently approved information collection.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act authorizes the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) and South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) to prepare and amend fishery management plans for any fishery in Federal waters under their respective jurisdictions. NMFS and the Gulf Council manage the reef fish fishery in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) under the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico. NMFS and the South Atlantic Council manage the fishery for rock shrimp in the South Atlantic under the FMP for the Shrimp Fishery in the South Atlantic Region. The vessel monitoring system (VMS) regulations for the Gulf reef fish fishery and the South Atlantic rock shrimp fishery may be found at 50 CFR §§ 622.28 and 622.205, respectively.

The FMPs and the implementing regulations contain several specific management areas

where fishing is restricted or prohibited to protect habitat or spawning aggregations, or to control fishing pressure. Unlike size, bag, and trip limits, where the catch can be monitored on shore when a vessel returns to port, area restrictions require at-sea enforcement. However, at-sea enforcement of offshore areas is difficult due to the distance from shore and the limited number of patrol vessels, resulting in a need to improve enforceability of area fishing restrictions through remote sensing methods. In addition, all fishing gears are subject to some area fishing restrictions. Because of the sizes of these areas and the distances from shore, the effectiveness of enforcement through over flights and at-sea interception is limited. An electronic VMS allows a more effective means to monitor vessels for intrusions into restricted areas.

The VMS provides effort data and significantly aids in enforcement of areas closed to fishing. All position reports are treated in accordance with NMFS existing guidelines for confidential data. As a condition of authorized fishing for or possession of Gulf reef fish or South Atlantic rock shrimp in or from Federal waters, vessel owners or operators subject to VMS requirements must allow NMFS, the United States Coast Guard, and their authorized officers and designees, access to the vessel's position data obtained from the VMS.

II. Method of Collection

Respondents have a choice of either electronic or paper forms. Methods of submittal include e-mail of electronic forms, and mail and facsimile transmission of paper forms.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-0544.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular submission (extension of a current information collection).

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 927.

Estimated Time Per Response: Installation, 5 hours; installation and activation checklist, 20 minutes; power-down exemption requests, 5 minutes; transmission of fishing activity reports, 1 minute; and annual maintenance, 2 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 2,557.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$1,466,255 in start-up, transfer, operations, and maintenance costs.

IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the

request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: August 28, 2018.

Sarah Brabson,

NOAA PRA Clearance Officer.

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

[FR Doc. 2018-19092 Filed: 8/31/2018 8:45 am; Publication Date: 9/4/2018]